Book 4

Newbies and Ghouls

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Chapter 1

Taking In

In the hallway,

Vlad was walking through it. He found Class 3 and decided to stay here. He had a couple of friends or so from there after all. When he entered the class, everyone instantly stared at his face. “Erm”, Vlad sweated. Blossom waved at him with a bright smile, but there was no one next to her. “Blossom!”, Vlad greeted. Then Mr. Mando walked up to Vlad. “Vlad?”, Mr. Mando asked. Vlad was fairly afraid of the depraved man, but he wanted to ask him for some help anyways. “Mr. Mando, may I join your class?”, Vlad asked.

Mr. Mando was hesitant enough to not allow Vlad into the class. He was tired of dealing with the three students who had to be kicked out. So much so that he had enough of having more than 17 students. “No, no, no, and no”, Mr. Mando replied. Vlad was filled with disappointment. “Fine”, he sighed. Vlad sadly walked out of the door, filled with sorrow. He thought that class was nice, but it really wasn’t. Though that should be obvious since the events of Dexter’s attack occurred.

Afterward, he saw two girls from Class 3 and a boy from Class 4 walking together to Class 2. He didn’t mind them. They weren’t worth his time anyways. He walked up to Class 4 and saw the intimidating students. They looked like they were warriors from the medieval times. Vlad didn’t mind their faces and tapped onto Mr. Barley’s shoulder. “Mr. Barley, may I join your class? Mrs. Delilah kicked me out and—“.

Vlad got shut up by Mr. Barley's rage. "No! Never in a million years! Ergh! I've seen what you've done with your silly team! You even corrupted Aster here!", Mr. Barley yelled. Vlad sighed and gave up instantly. He took his head back at Aster, who was frowning (for the first time), then walked away sadly. He left in sore disappointment, but he sort of expected that the harsh Class 4 teacher would disapprove of him. After all, Team Toxic had made a bad name for themselves.

Vlad gave up and went to his last resort—Class 2. This might be the only class who'd accept Class 2, probably because there were no Team Toxic members present in the class. Vlad peeped through the door's tiny window and saw the chaotic students who just kept on spelling out trouble. This was because Mrs. Garcia wasn't present yet.

Vlad didn't want to think much of it, but it sure is more chaotic than the other classes. His class was the coolest, Class 3 is the kindest one, while Class 4 is strong enough to fend for themselves. Class 2? They're only known for their mystery solving. Vlad then looked closer at the students. He knew Nadia first. She was the sister of one of good friends, Nate. Vlad left the door just to try to convince a teacher that he could join the class, but then he bumped into 2 girls from Class 3 and a boy from Class 4. "Youch!", Vlad exclaimed. "Gee! Watch where you're going!", Vlad yelled. Then he saw the students and instantly recognized them. "Wow. Nice to see you guys…", he said with an unsurprised voice. "Nice to see you too… Vlad", the boy from Class 4 sighed. These people were actually the same ones from the day before. They wanted to talk to their respective teachers for their wrongdoings, then they got kicked out of their classes to join Class 2. "Wait. Wasn't Kevin supposed to go with you?", a girl in a blue dress asked.

She was pretty. Her eyes were blue, her hair was in a bun and her shoes were white. She apparently knew about the situation between Vlad, Kevin and Mrs. Delilah. “Actually, everyone in Team Toxic was involved in it”, another girl said. She was dressed in yellow. “Really?!”, the blue girl gasped. “Uh. Let me remember...”, Vlad said. “Right! You’re Marlyn”, Vlad pointed at the blue girl. “You’re Jasmine”, he then pointed at the yellow girl. “And you’re Paul!”, he finally pointed at the boy. He led out a sigh of relief, being prideful of how he even remembered their names. “Man, I really nailed the names!”, Vlad chuckled. The others were confused.

“I bet he just wants that stupid duo Blossom and Aster here”, Paul whispered to the girls. They looked upset but sort of agreed with Paul’s statement too. They realized afterward that they have to let go of their “niceness” charade and they had to act like themselves. “I heard you!”, Vlad yelled. “They’re not stupid. At least they’re not like any of you Class 4 students”. Paul was angered by that second-handed comment and gave a death glare into Vlad’s eyes. Vlad wasn’t too intimidated though. He was already used to how serious Paul is, and everyone from Class 4 to some extent. One of his closest friends is a member of that class after all!

Suddenly, a boy came. It was Spencer. He opened the creaky door and saw the four non-Class 2 students. Spencer, being the calm boy that he is, sighed and looked at them. “I just want to go to the bathroom…”, he facepalmed. “What do you even want?”, he asked afterward. “Please, take us in”, Paul suddenly begged. “Yeah. Our teachers kicked us out and led us to your class”, Marlyn begged with Paul. Spencer was confused but felt horrible for the four, so he entered the classroom again to call out for Mrs. Garcia. “Miss!”, he yelled. She walked out, feeling mad. She assumed that she was called out for a trivial reason. “How many times do I have to say this to my students…”, she mumbled to herself. Then she noticed the non-Class

2 students and panicked. “WHAT?! What are THEY doing here!?”, she yelled at Spencer, blowing his hair like she’s a hairdryer. She started pushing the students away from the door. “Get out and get back to your classes!”, she yelled. “Wait!”, Vlad stopped her. “What is it, Team Toxic member?!”, she shouted. She stopped pushing the students and started to get heated. “Our teachers kicked us out of our classes, and they told us we should get here”, Paul explained. Mrs. Garcia finally knew but is still doubting bringing them into the class. She had no choice though. She had to because she knew none of the other teachers would accept them in.

“Fine. You can come. Please don’t cause trouble though!”, she said with regret. The students smiled wide and walked into the class. Spencer was watching all of this and started to wonder how much they’ll change the class, whether for the better or for the worse.

When the students entered the class, everyone was giving them a weird glare. The softer ones were fairly afraid of the “newbies”. The teacher entered in. She tapped her table and widened her arms. “Welcome new students! Indeed, they’re the new members of Class 2!”, Mrs. Garcia proudly announced. The students were shocked, some even dropping their jaws. The new students were waving, at least Marlyn, Jasmine and Paul. Vlad had a sinister look in his face. He’s looking like he’s plotting something malicious. Something big.

The students started their murmurs as the new students were walking to their seats. Mrs. Garcia stopped the four though. “Kids! Did you forget to introduce yourselves?”, Mrs. Garcia asked. The three walked towards the tip of the class while Vlad sighed. “I didn’t”, Paul answered. “We didn’t”, Marlyn corrected, hitting Paul’s shoulder. Vlad slowly walked to the tip of the classroom while Spencer walked to his seat.

“I’ll go first: I’m Paul, a former student of Class 4 but has been moved to this class because I talked about Mr. Barley behind his back”, Paul introduced.

“I’m Marlyn! I’m a former member of Class 3 until now. I and Jasmine here have made a silly little prank on Mr. Mando and, well, he took it too far!”, Marlyn chuckled afterward.

Vlad was just standing there, until he was reminded that it was his turn by Jasmine. “Ahem. I’m Vlad! I have a real name, but I prefer to be called by Vlad. I was a part of Class 1 before I stole Mrs. Delilah’s prized and rare apple. Childish, I know. Oh yeah, and I’m a member of Team Toxic”, he grinned. The students rolled their eyes at the sound of that. A Team Toxic member in their class? Not in their watch.

Mrs. Garcia clapped her hands and waved her hands up in the air. “Now let’s give a warm welcome to these new students!”, Mrs. Garcia said. The students were cheering and clapping. Marlyn, Jasmine and Paul were looking formal and smiling, while Vlad had a smug smile on his face. He looked away from everyone and into the white board, plotting something. But what is it that he’s plotting?

Chapter 2

Toxic

During break,

Bruno was walking alone until someone approached him. “Bruno!”, the boy yelled. Bruno turned back just to see Alex running to him. He was sweating and panting for his breath. “What happened?”, Bruno asked. “Nothing much. I just want to walk with you. My brother’s busy right now, so you’re going to be my company for today”, Alex explained. Bruno smiled and got excited. He was even close to hopping around the field surrounding him and Alex, but he didn’t because he had the common sense to realize that it would make him look insane.

The boys were trotting through the pathway to a playground. They didn’t want to play though. They only wanted to watch their classmates play. Indeed, they might be teenagers, but it doesn’t mean they’ve fully grown up. They were watching while eating their PB & J sandwiches. They exchanged their meals too. “Oh, Bruno. I’ll get to the bathroom. Just wait for me, ok?”, Alex informed Bruno. He nodded as Alex walked to the bathroom.

Bruno was watching and watching. Other classes started to play alongside his own. He didn’t like that but he accepted them anyways. It’s like how he had to accept his new classmates, one of them being a girl he developed feelings for. “Ah. Jasmine is in my class now… Wonder how things will work out between us!”, Bruno thought while smiling. He looked at Jasmine who was sitting alone. He was thinking about approaching her, but his social anxiety ate him up. He could only look at Jasmine’s blush-filled face as she was eating her ham

sandwich. He finished his orange juice and started to gain enough guts to stand up and started to take steps, baby steps. His hand held onto a pole nearby him, but he eventually reached a part where there wasn't anything to hold onto. He had no choice but to walk on his own. As soon as he did, something flashed into his eyes and everything turned to black.

"Mehehehe!", a laugh came out.

It was a familiar laugh to Bruno. Perhaps he heard it the day before?

"C'mon! We don't have much time left!", a girl's voice followed.

Again, a familiar voice!

Bruno finally opened his eyes just to find two familiar faces.

"Huh?", Bruno questioned. He got up. "Oops", a girl said as she covered her mouth and looked away from Bruno. Bruno looked left and right at the boy and girl until he recognized them. "Wait! Aren't you—". Before he could even finish his sentence, the boy commanded, "Give us your lunch money!". The boy pushed Bruno down to the grassy ground. "Ow!", Bruno cried. "I don't have any, I swear!". "Too scared to talk to us, huh? Don't you remember us either?", the boy asked. Bruno was shivering, but he nodded. "Aster and… erm… Blossom, right?", Bruno gulped.

Aster made a snide smile and snapped his finger. "Right. You're smarter than I thought", Aster said. "What happened to you!?", Bruno exclaimed. "You were just friendly to me yesterday", he continued. Aster and Blossom laughed like a tickle went through them. "Since when have we been friendly to anyone?", Blossom asked. "Since you two met me", a voice came out.

It was a determined Alex! He closed his fists and got his posture ready for battle.

“Alex!”, Bruno exclaimed. Bruno kicked Aster’s head as he got up.

“Ow! Hey!”, Aster yelled. Bruno hid behind Alex, who then protected him.

“Well, well, well! This is gonna be fun!”, Blossom laughed.

“So, Alex. You’re back”, Aster said. Alex didn’t say a word, only glaring at the two.

“Don’t talk to Bruno”, Alex suddenly said.

“Why not?”, Aster asked.

“Just don’t! He’s a new student here. Please don’t stoop this low!”, Alex begged the two. They didn’t listen though. The members of the team don’t usually listen to the rules.

“Fine. We didn’t want this Bruno guy anyways. Yeah, we were supposed to take this guy to our classes just to convince the teachers that I and Blossom should stay in the same class, but whatever”, Aster said quickly.

Bruno’s jaws dropped, and so did Alex’s. “Th-Then what did you need the lunch money for!?”, Bruno yelled behind Alex’s back.

“I just need some money”, Aster answered. “So we can buy plushies for me!”, Blossom danced. Aster pinched Blossom’s cheek. “No! I’m not even sharing the money with you!”, Aster yelled. “Besides, we didn’t even get the money”. Bruno gulped. “Greedy as always”, Alex rolled his eyes. Blossom and Aster walked away, giving up on being truly bad apples.

Alex sighed.

“Alex. Thank you”, Bruno thanked. His eyes glimmered in tears of joy. “You’re welcome. It’s what friends do”, Alex smiled. Bruno was surprised that Alex even called Bruno a friend. They met a few weeks ago, how could a friendship even form that fast?

“By the way, did you really have any history with these Team Toxic guys?”, Bruno asked. Alex sighed and decided to admit something.

“I have. Actually, I have to admit… I was a member of the team”, Alex said. Bruno gasped about finding out about the information. “Well, not for a long time. Only for two weeks. That’s when I found out that nobody was who they really say they are”, Alex explained. “On that note: Please do not join the team. Trust me: They’re good at manipulating others to join their team. They’ve done plenty of stuff to new members that have been manipulated to join. I can’t name what but it’s bad”.

Bruno didn’t say a word because of his surprise. How rotten is this team? He wondered why too. “Alex. Do you even know why they’re so toxic?”, Bruno asked.

“It’s because of their parents. They’re all criminals”, Alex said.

Bruno hopped. “What?! Really!?”, he yelled. Alex nodded to that.

Bruno started to wonder about other things at that point. It seemed like Alex had no friends before Bruno even met him. The two were having a walk together because they finished their food. That’s when Bruno started striking out questions.

“Alex. Did… did you have friends before me?”, Bruno asked.

Alex looked at Bruno, then at the ground. “I did, actually, but they’ve drifted away from me”, Alex said. “One of them was a boy named

Wilson, the others… well… I don't want to name them", Alex continued. Bruno started to realize how deep of a person Alex is.

"Wilson, huh?", Bruno asked. "Mhm. He was actually in Class 2, but ever since he moved to Class 1, he… he forgot about me", Alex started tearing up. He covered himself and looked away from Bruno. The two paused their walking. "Sorry, I just…". Alex couldn't even complete his sentence. Bruno pat Alex's shoulder, then hugged him. "It's fine", Bruno assured. Then Alex punched Bruno on the forehead.

"Hey! What was that for!?", Bruno yelled.

"For hugging me. You do know I like my personal space, right?", Alex asked. Bruno realized and apologized while embarrassed. He just wanted to comfort Alex but it totally went upside down!

Nonetheless, Alex understood Bruno just wanted to comfort his new friend.

A few minutes into the walk, they got blocked by Blossom and Aster.

"Are you kidding me?", Bruno sighed.

The two noticed Bruno and Alex and smiled. "Well, well, well, you're back", Blossom chuckled. "What's so funny?", Alex asked. "What's so funny is who's behind me", Aster said. Blossom and Aster made way so Bruno and Alex could see who are behind them. It was…

Vlad! And the other members too. There were two other unknown members though.

"Hey Bruno and Alex! Nice seeing you again, new classmates", Vlad greeted sarcastically. "Hey Vlad…", Alex groaned. Vlad walked up to Alex and forced a smile. "Smile wide! C'mon! We're classmates now. We have to get along", Vlad said. Alex slapped Vlad's hand and glared at him. "Sure, sure", Alex responded. He gritted his teeth afterward.

“So, you two are Vlad’s new classmates, huh? I’ve heard of you too. Alex, right?”, a boy asked. He was dressed in yellow and purple with a hint of black. His hair was mullet-like, but not fully a mullet. He blended in with the team’s strange styles. “Ah, it’s you. Mercury. Indeed, I’m Alex”, Alex greeted by shaking hands. Bruno looked behind Mercury and found the two other mysterious members. He recognized them!

“Ivon? Laurel?”, Bruno asked. He started to smile wide. “I… I didn’t expect to see you two here!”, Bruno grinned. Ivon and Laurel instantly remembered Bruno too. They smiled but didn’t say a word. “What are you doing here though? And weren’t you kicked out of the school?”, Bruno kept on asking. Laurel sighed and explained. “The answer to the last question is complicated. As for the other questions… We just wanted some new friends! We think they’re a perfect fit for us”, Laurel said. Ivon nodded to all of that. “I remember when you used to be best friends with Pacha, Laurel… and you were a great student, Ivon”, Bruno said as he approached them. The others were confused since they weren’t from the other school.

“If they were so good… then…”. Alex started to have memories flash through his very eyes. “Ergh! Don’t listen to them!”, Alex yelled as he stomped. He bit his tongue afterward, instantly shutting his impulsive mouth. “Heh. So you remember that? I’m surprised”, Vlad shrugged. “Say, Aster and Blossom told me about… what just happened”, Vlad continued. He put his arm onto Bruno’s shoulder and gave him an odd look. “Yeah. Look, they just wanted my m-“. Bruno’s mouth was shut by Vlad’s skinny finger. “No, no, no. You’re getting it all wrong, little man! It’s just a misunderstanding. They want you here”, Vlad said. Bruno was shivering. His legs could barely support him. He was thinking and remembering what Alex just told him, then ran away.

“Bruno!”, Alex yelled. He followed Bruno without even saying a word to the team. “Hey! Come back! We haven’t even had a talk!”, Aster yelled, almost following the two but couldn’t. “Leave them be. It’s their fault they didn’t even accept our… invitation”, Kevin said with a smile. Unlike his underlings though, Mercury was upset by the idea of taking advantage of such a child. It’s an odd thought for him to have, since he’s known for being heartless whenever he recruits a new member that has been blackmailed to join. Blossom tapped Mercury’s shoulder and looked at him with her sparkling eyes. “Were you thinking of something?”, she asked. Mercury shook his head no. “I wasn’t. I was just… thinking about something…”, he responded. “Isn’t that what Blossom asked?!?!”, Aster asked. Mercury didn’t mind Aster’s ask for logic. He was only remembering his time with Alex back in the old days.

Chapter 3

Tour Around

After break, everyone got to their classes. However, the teacher didn't come yet. The students didn't mind it much. As a matter of fact, they were happy that they didn't get to study, even though Mr. Adams is infamous for being late. They continued to hope that he wasn't there.

Bruno and Alex were playing guessing games with each other. One of them gives a hint for what they were thinking of, then the other guesses. Any more than three hints will make you the loser. Bruno was giving 2 hints to Alex. "Ok! This is the third one: It's hard", Bruno said. "What? Hard? Ok, tell me", Alex said. "No? If I told you, then you'd win", Bruno said. "No. I mean, tell me the hint", Alex responded. Bruno was confused until he realized what Alex meant. "Oh! No! What I mean is: The hint is that the thing is hard! You know, stiff and tough", Bruno explained. Alex's doubts were cleared and he chuckled about it. "Uh… It's brown, has a nice texture and it's hard… hmm…", Alex kept thinking. "A wooden spoon?", Alex answered. Bruno hit the table and squealed. "Nope! It's a wooden table!", Bruno said. Alex was disappointed and mad. "What's even the difference? It's a wooden object!", Alex yelled. "If you said wood, then you would get half a point. If you said something like… wooden spoon, then you would've been wrong", Bruno whispered and smiled. It was a smug one. Alex's hair went crazy afterward. "Ok, let's stop the game! I know it's making you crazy", Bruno laughed. Alex's eyes were twitching at that point. "Yes. Let's", Alex responded with a different voice.

Then Marlyn asked Bella something. "Pst, Bella", Marlyn whispered. Bella noticed and looked at her. "Yeah, Marlyn?", she asked. Nadia

noticed and looked at Marlyn the same way Bella did. “May you give a tour around? The other people in this row wants a tour too”, Marlyn asked. “Of course! Nadia, Roselynn, let’s do the honors!”, Bella cheered. The other two girls got out of their seats, so did Bella. The new students got up and approached the teacher’s desk alongside the tour guides.

“This is the teacher’s desk. This is where they finish their work. It’s mainly Mrs. Garcia who works here though”, Bella explained.

They walked over to the whiteboard.

“This is the whiteboard… but it’s green”, Bella said. She paused and considered that anomaly.

“Anyways! It’s the whiteboard. We can draw, write and even watching things here! If the teacher commits to watching something anyways. Most of the lessons have been drawn and written down here”, Nadia explained.

Roselynn then led the students to the tables.

“Here are the tables. This is where the students sit, whether they’re a member of Class 2 or not.”, Roselynn explained.

“They’re Sarah and Carly. They’re the annoying brats here”, Bella whispered.

“Those two are Alex and… mmm”, Nadia’s mouth started to water. “Bruno…”, she said. Her eyes were hearts and was attracted to Bruno like a magnet. Bella pulled her away from the boy. “Stop that, Nadia!”, Bella whispered.

“Ahem. Those other two seats belong to Nadia and Bella respectively”, Roselynn said.

The trio continued on and on with introducing the students until they reached Connor and Casper. “… They’re the shy kids!”, Bella said.

“Aww! I love shy kids!”, Marlyn cheered. “Don’t any of you do too?”, Marlyn turned to ask the other new students. They were silent though. “Am I not the shy kid?”, Jasmine asked. Marlyn chuckled for a bit and looked at the tour guides. “Thanks for everything, you three”, Marlyn thanked. The three smiled. “You’re welcome! We hope you enjoy your stay here too”, Roselynn responded. “By the way, are you going to leave?”, Nadia asked. Marlyn begun to remember, then finally did so. “Yup! Mr. Mando told me that I have to return a week or so later. A month at maximum”, Marlyn said. “Ah, ok!”, Nadia responded.

Everyone got back to their seats, with the other three new students staying quiet.

Suddenly, Mrs. Garcia came into the room and looked at her students. “Erk. Who’s supposed to come now?”, she asked. “Mr. Adams, the Science teacher”, Sheldon answered. Mrs. Garcia was thinking about him then walked out of the class. The students were left wondering about her intentions. They continued chatting a few minutes later.

After a while, the doors slowly opened but not revealing even a staff member, but instead, some members of… Team Toxic? They rushed in without any thoughts in mind. They nearly broke the door! When walking in, Blossom waved hands at her former classmates, Marlyn and Jasmine, who both waved back. “Guys! I thought you were busy”, Vlad said in surprise. “Ah, we are busy, but we excused the teacher!”, Kevin said. “We said that we’ll go to the bathroom”, Mercury snickered. Even Ivon and Laurel were there. “Say, your class is pretty noisy… or was”, Ivon said. Vlad sighed. “I know. What else can I do? I’m forced to stay here”, Vlad whispered. In the background, everyone else was watching them, which made them silent. Team Toxic had grown a reputation ever since the last grade, so it’s no surprise this had happened. Bruno was the only one who seemed to feel something

other than animosity towards the team, especially after hearing that every member is a child of a criminal.

“It’s fine! You’re still going to be my bestie!”, Kevin said with a smile. “—Our”, Blossom corrected, hitting his shoulder. Mercury slammed his hands onto Paul’s table and smiled wide. “Hope you stay safe here!”, Mercury said, as if the class is a nuclear waste zone. It turns out that the team itself is made of toxic waste—not in a literal way, obviously. With their odd styles, everyone glared and stared at them. Paul being the scariest of all, he punched Aster and pulled him by his shirt then close to Paul’s mouth. “Get out of here. Now”, Paul warned. “You and your stupid toxic team will have to get out before everyone in this class will even attack all of you!”, Paul continued. Aster was trying so hard not to laugh. This is coming from a Class 4 student? Pathetic—at least to him. “Yeah, sure. As if I believe you”, Aster laughed. “Believe me! They can be tough! I could see it from the boys! One of them is l-like a robot!”, Paul continued. Aster brushed everything off though and just walked away. “Yeah, right”, he said. Blossom soon followed him, waving goodbye at Vlad. “Gotta go, I guess”, Kevin shrugged. The other four followed soon. Vlad frowned the instant they left.

Paul was frustrated by Aster’s reaction while Bruno was… interested in the team. He wanted to have a talk with them after class, but when exactly? That is his question.

The question that’ll be answered soon enough. He turned to Alex, looking forward to asking a question, but right before he did, Mrs. Garcia slammed the door. She stepped in with her gown and prepared to announce something. “Students, Mr. Adams is absent for today!”, she announced. The students’ faces lit up and they cheered. Mrs. Garcia sighed. She was used to this, which was surprising since it had

been 3 weeks since she first met these students. She stepped out of the class after some cheering from the students. They stopped once she left.

A few moments of silence later, they continued their cheering. A cause for celebration as the students would always say. They love it when teachers get absent. If a teacher is absent, then that obviously means no lesson is going to be held, even if a substitute teacher intervenes. Everyone ate their food, and was close to having a food fight. Mandy, however, was acting odd. She kept looking at the ground, almost like she was sleeping. Maverick was watching her with great concern. He might be a troublemaker, but that doesn't mean he'll be a good-for-nothing friend! He decided to give her the well-deserved space she needs. After all, good friends give their best friends their space. He participated in the student's feast, eating with his seat-neighbors, Renard and Max. Renard had more… appetizing food though. Renard had a large sandwich that fits for two people, and apple juice, while Max had crumbled up pieces of hardware. Max could be working on a computer, but the rest of his lunch-bag beg to differ. "Building a computer or something?", Maverick questioned Max. The boy didn't answer and then… ate… the hardware. It was gross for Maverick, but not so much for Renard. "What the—is this normal!?", Maverick exclaimed. Renard shrugged. "It is, for Max", he answered. Maverick's eyes grew smaller in shock. He took his sight away from the machine-eating Max and continued to eat with Renard.

After the feast, Maverick looked at Mandy and looking forward to pranking their classmates. Mr. Adams wasn't there after all. Mandy was still moody though. Maverick didn't want to think much of it, so he ignored her. The partying went crazy. The lights were off and music was playing from someone's laptop. It was Sheldon's. The music was specifically the likes of "Party Rock Anthem" or "I Gotta Feeling". During the noise, Bruno was wondering about Team Toxic.

Looking for answers, he turned to Alex who was drinking milk. “Alex”, he said. Alex looked at Bruno and made out a “hm?” sound. “Have you… ever took your time to… sympathize with Team Toxic?”, Bruno asked. Alex stopped drinking and threw the packet at Bruno. “Bruno, please. I know you’re considering joining the team, but don’t, for your own sake”, Alex suddenly said. He didn’t answer Bruno’s question. “I never even tried to sympathize with them”, Alex finally answered. He looked away from the curious Bruno with his cold mind. “So, Bruno. Take my advice and never join the team”, Alex stated. Bruno dropped his throat and looked at the table, not responding to Alex at all. It seems like he **is** considering joining the team. He was wondering if the decision would be the best idea of his life or the worst. Who really knows?

Meanwhile, Maverick started to get ticked off by Mandy’s state of depression. He looked at her, then sighed. He was hesitant to even look at her face, but he decided to confront her anyways. “Mandy?”, Maverick asked. He poked her shoulder, then poked again. “Mandy? Are you asleep?”, Maverick asked again. Mandy got up, looking like she cried. “Mandy! What happened!?”, Maverick yelled. “Nothing”, Mandy answered. She crossed her arms and tried to ignore what she just did. Maverick was concerned but decided to leave everything to her. He knew it’d be personal for her. Mandy then got up and went up to the middle of class. “Sheldon. Turn off the music”, she requested. Sheldon did so.

“Everyone, please stop eating and listen to me”, she requested. Everyone surprisingly did so. She smiled, unlike earlier with Maverick. “Maverick come with me because… I’ll tell all of you a spooky, skin-crawling story!”, Mandy said with passion. Everyone lit up and got excited. Who doesn’t love a good scary story?

Chapter 4

The Tale

Maverick pushed the teacher's table in front of the whiteboard while the lights were off. Mandy stepped on top of the table and stood still on it. She got her flashlight and turned it on, flashing her face in the dreaded darkness. The flashlight even created a shadow of Mandy, which resembled a ghost.

"Here is the tale of… the haunted doll!", Mandy shouted in a spooky tone.

"Oooh!", everyone said in awe, not even seeming to be scared.

Mandy sat down in fear that she'll trip on something and fall down. That would ruin the mood she created. Maverick went to Craig and asked him for permission to use his laptop. Once he was allowed to, Maverick used Craig's laptop in order to turn on a thunder sound effect. The sound came by, and Mandy flickered the flashlight. The students were either shivering or not shocked by any bit.

Mandy told the entire tale with her own daunting voice.

"Once upon a time,

There was a little, innocent girl who had a normal life. She had parents who any abused kid would love, and friends anyone with toxic friends would love. She even had siblings who she constantly played with. One day, she decided to buy a doll. The doll was her best friend. She would sleep and cuddle with it every night. She would even play with it a lot.

One faithful day, she was hanging out with her friends when one of her friends told a scary story about a haunted doll that would eat their owner. The girl was terrified. She started to suspect that the doll would eat her, so she decided to stop cuddling and playing with it.

Eventually, the girl grew old enough that she would throw away the plush. The fact that the story even frightened the girl was the salt in the wound for the doll. The girl's parents wondered and asked their daughter about the doll, but she didn't say anything about it, as if it never even existed.

The next night, the doll would come to life. It was supposedly possessed by a vengeful spirit. Eventually, the doll took away the girl's life. The girl's loved-ones were devastated, as anyone with such an innocent and sweet child would feel.

In the girl's memorial, the doll watched as her loved-ones cried and yearned for their little girl. The doll wanted more blood and more lives to take. So, it went on a killing spree. It disappeared after a lot of time passed. It was never seen again. It is said that someday, that doll will appear and terrorize everyone though… It is also said that the girl still lived on as a ghost…

Sadly ever after.", Mandy told.

The students were confused by the ending. This can't be a fairy tale, can't it? Maverick saw Mandy nearly tear up. It seemed like the tale was personal to her, or her so-called tale. "Mandy?", he asked. Mandy looked away from him. "It's nothing", she answered. Carly and Sarah, even after seeing Mandy crying, couldn't give two hoots about her. She wasn't rich after all.

Meanwhile, the others looked at her with concern. They were more concerned about Mandy than her own tale. “I think she just needs her space”, Spencer whispered to everyone. Everyone agreed. “By the way, where did you get that story from?”, Max asked. Mandy fully looked away from her classmates. She didn’t and couldn’t answer Max’s question for some reason. That reason is probably personal. “Like I said, Max”, Spencer said. Max sighed. He only wanted to know, but perhaps a simple question would trigger Mandy too. Everyone wondered why, but those wonders and questions won’t be answered anytime soon.

Maverick pushed back the table to its rightful place while Mandy walked to her seat. Maverick followed Mandy and showed a bit of concern for her. The other students were talking about the tale, all of them wondering if it was real or not because of how specific the tale was. Mandy was growing to be more upset as the talks grew.

The students in the back (the new ones) were talking to each other about how the class is. The Class 3 girls say that it’s a tolerable enough class, much more than their “rival” class, Class 4. Meanwhile, Paul and Vlad were making fun of the class, calling it a goofy class full of nothing fluff. Paul had more kind things to say about the class than Vlad though.

“Besides. Isn’t this class at least better than your silly team?”, Paul asked after Vlad commented on how toxic the class can get. “Plus, your class can get crazy too”, he added. Vlad was left silent after that, but responded back quickly. “So what?”, Vlad shrugged, ignoring all of Paul’s points. “Team Toxic isn’t even that silly, mind you. We did do some… charity work, I guess”, Vlad answered back. It was obvious Vlad was lying judging by his body language. He won’t even make eye contact with Paul.

Suddenly, a teacher came. It was a guy in a pink suit with a blue tie. He had a funny-looking moustache. He also looked like he's related to Sarah in some way, with his hair being the most similar trait he has with Sarah. "Students! What's going on here?!", the man yelled. Sid slowly turned on the lights while Craig turned off his laptop. The man looked around the messy classroom. Everyone has a suspicious looking grin.

Ignoring them, the man looked at Sarah and lit up with a bright smile. "Sarah, my sweetie!", the man ran to her. The man was huge enough to carry her. Bruno looked at the man and Sarah with bended eyebrows and a pouty mouth behind the front seats. "Who is he?", Bruno asked openly. "Who am I?!", the man yelled, dropping Sarah onto the table. "Hmph! He is my dad!", Sarah yelled. Bruno was shocked, but at the same time, it was obvious since they looked so related.

"I'm the substitute teacher, Mr. Isaac!", Mr. Isaac introduced himself. "Oh, I see. Because Mr. Adams isn't here, you're taking over!", Bruno said. "No. I came here to tell everyone that Mr. Adams is absent… due to an injury that his daughter has", Mr. Isaac sighed. Everyone gasped and turned from joy to sorrow.

"And all of YOU have been celebrating about it!", Mr. Isaac yelled and accused the students. "What?! No way!", Violet cried. "Mr. Isaac, sir. We didn't even know about Mr. Adam's circumstance here, so shut your mouth!", Bella yelled back. Mr. Isaac raised his eyebrow and got his fists ready. Bella squealed in fear. "Haha! See what happens when you miss with my dad… and me?", Sarah laughed with her croaky throat. The students were angered.

"In the meantime, I'll take care of the classroom. Thank you for your patience… and celebrating", Mr. Isaac sighed as he walked to the teacher's table. He noticed the footprints Mandy left. He looked at the

students, then at the table, shrugging it off and sitting on the seat. The students sighed in relief, but felt bad for Mr. Adams. They continued their day after the bell rung, though of course, the students are still loud and remembering the fun they just had. Mandy remembered the story she told and regretted telling it in the first place.

Chapter 5

Sparring

During sparring class, Spencer was fighting with Paul. Spencer had his spear while Paul had his sword. The weapons are obviously fake; They used them to full effect anyways. The other students were watching them fight in the meantime, except for Sheldon and Riley, who both fought before the currently fighting duo.

The fake sword was slashing through Spencer's face, but he was tough enough to endure the slash. Then Spencer's spear stabbed through Paul, but it was only his hair. Another stab came, but it was under Paul's armpit. Paul went above the ground by jumping, then jumped on Spencer's head and then twisted it around. Spencer grabbed Paul's arm and threw him into the ground. He got his spear and put it onto his chest.

"Good job, Spencer, but don't get too violent", a teacher clapped while saying. It was Jackie, one of the two sparring teachers. The other one is Bruce, who was talking to Connor and Casper about fighting back enemies. "Thank you. I'll try not to. I just… want to prove myself against this Class 4 student!", Spencer said. "Ahem. He's your classmate now", Jackie corrected. Spencer remembered and frowned instantly, though he always frowns. Paul got up and got his fists ready. Spencer was ready to fight until Paul revealed that the fists were meant to form a handshake. Spencer responded to the handshake with respect. "Let's continue", Paul whispered. Spencer smiled back with determination. Unlike before, they fought without their weapons. It was a surprise to the teachers, but they were proud at the same time.

Meanwhile, Bruno was watching Spencer and Paul fight with their bare hands and even feet. He wished he could be like them, but he knew he never could. He glanced at Alex who was busy reading a book. It seems like Alex was focused on reading the book, so Bruno looked away and gave Alex his space. Bruno looked back at the fight then started thinking about Team Toxic again. He forced himself to stop thinking about them, but he couldn't. It was close to impossible for a boy like him! Suddenly, he remembered that tale Mandy told. He looked at Mandy and Maverick who were talking. Mandy didn't look as sad as before. Bruno decided to walk up to them and have a talk with them.

"Hey Mandy. Hey Maverick", Bruno greeted in the background, which turned into the foreground. "Hey Bruno!", Maverick greeted back. "Huh. You're acting more friendly than usual!", Bruno smiled. "I know. Mandy was just excited about the tale!", Maverick smiled back. Mandy was silent before, but she suddenly opened her mouth. "Why did you come anyways?", Mandy asked. "Oh, I just want to ask about that. The tale", Bruno replied. Mandy and Maverick glanced at each other, then back at Bruno.

"What's the question?", Maverick asked.

"Right. I was just wondering… was it true?", Bruno asked.

Mandy gulped, but she wasn't crying like before. Perhaps things have improved since then. "It wasn't", Mandy said with a straight face. Bruno was amused by the answer, but he went with it anyways. "And about where I got it: My father told me about it. It's actually a family story passed down from generation to generation. I think it's someone who made up a story and said it was real to their son though", Mandy explained. Bruno was also amused by that explanation.

Suddenly, Bruce went up to the trio. He rubbed his chin and his eyebrows formed an interested look. “Talking about a tale, I see?”, he asked. Mandy stared at him. “Yep. Mandy here told a tale about a haunted doll!”, Maverick answered. Mandy grinned as if she was proud of the story she told. “Aww. Can you tell me it?”, Bruce asked. Mandy nodded.

In the background, Mandy was telling Bruce the story. Meanwhile, Bruno and Maverick were watching her tell the story. “Say, why aren’t you with Alex?”, Maverick asked, turning his head to Bruno. “He’s busy with reading”, Bruno answered. Maverick finally knew at that point. “By the way, have you felt that… Mandy has been acting weird recently?”, Maverick asked. He looked up at the roof, wondering about it. Bruno looked at Maverick. He was wondering why Maverick has been acting more serious than usual. Bruno answered Maverick anyways. “Sort of. I never saw her cry, but I did just meet her!”, Bruno answered. “Hey, remember the old school?”, Bruno suddenly asked. Maverick looked at Bruno with his pupils smaller. “Unfortunately, I do”, Maverick answered. Bruno chuckled. “Man. Everything was so weird there!”, Bruno said. “It’s weirder here. Seriously”, Maverick said with a straight-forward tone. Bruno was confused, but he has been in the school for a few weeks. It’s no surprised he was confused.

Then the two watched Spencer and Paul fight. Spencer pulled a punch at Paul, then pulled his spear and threw it at Paul, but it went past him. Paul was looking for his sword, then kicked Spencer right in his legs, letting Spencer trip. Spencer then tackled Paul. The two kept on punching. “Erk! I don’t think Spencer took my advice!”, Jackie exclaimed. Jackie ran to the scene. As soon as he did, Maverick and Bruno looked away from the mattress and looked at Mandy.

“Things have changed, hasn’t it?”, Bruno asked. Bruno looked at Maverick in the eyes, but the prankster didn’t look back, only at

Mandy. His eyes widened and put his hands together. “Maverick?”, Bruno asked. Maverick didn’t answer Bruno. He continued looking at his best friend. He blushed after some time. “Seriously”, Bruno sighed. Bruno got up and walked up to Alex, ditching Maverick. Bruno was more interested in Alex’s novel than Maverick’s love life after all. “Bruno?”, Maverick asked after snapping. He looked around for Bruno and realized he went in a sort of trans-like state. “Ah. Not this again…”, he sighed, putting his palms into his forehead while shutting his eyes.

“Well, that was over with!”, Mandy laughed. She walked towards a frozen Maverick who continued to stare at her again. Bruce was walking away from Mandy too. He waved at Mandy, but she didn’t respond, only looked at Maverick. Maverick shook his head eventually. “Oh, Mandy! How was it?”, Maverick suddenly said. “Er. It was great, I guess. Bruce liked it”, Mandy said. She looked at him with concern, then shrugged it off, sitting beside Maverick. She leaned onto his shoulder. Maverick blushed, turning entirely red.

Maverick looked at Mandy’s peachy-like face and then looked at Spencer and Paul bowing down to each other. He smiled.

Chapter 6

Trumpet

The bell rung. It was music class. The boys were playing the guitar, violin, cello and drums, while the girls were playing the piano, keytar, and many were singing. The more talented and gifted students were using DJ machines in order to produce electric music, or EDM. On the opposite spectrum, the worse students would play the flute, and not the good flute! It was one of those low-brow flute recorders from elementary school. However, nobody would dare to play the trumpet. It's odd. Some of the students from the other classes (namely Class 1 students) would play a saxophone.

The teacher all of this was Quaver. He kept on yelling the students. He yelled that they should get better, especially on instruments by the likes of guitars. Playing the guitar was a hard task for many, even those who are good at other instruments. Which strings creates the correct sound vibrations were hard to remember considering how many things you have to factor in with playing a guitar.

Quaver also had issues with his students playing some of the other instruments, but it isn't common. His assistant, Louie especially hate it when the students would play the drums. They would constantly create large amounts of noise! As a joke, the boys would always play the "ba-dam-tss" sound on the drums, mostly Maverick would do that.

Quaver constantly criticized the class for not being like Class 1 too. He favored Class 1 the most out of all the other ones, with Class 4 being his least favorite for their harsh nature.

Alex would be playing the violin while Bruno would be playing an electric guitar. “Hell yeah! I love this!”, Bruno yelled. Alex shut Bruno’s mouth with his finger. “Shush it”, he whispered. Bruno smiled awkwardly. In another seat was Bella and Nadia. Nadia was playing the keytar while Bella was looking for another instrument to play other than the piano. Bella was already good enough at playing the piano because she was playing it since she was 6. Her parents always wanted her to excel in the musical department since she seemed to most fit as a musician. Her heart begged to differ though.

“Do you want to play the xylophone?”, Winnie asked. “Nah. Too childish for me”, Bella answered. She wanted something much more sophisticated than a piano, which is an instrument that already is. “How about the lyra?”, Roselynn asked while playing said instrument “Nope!”, Bella declined. Roselynn and Winnie sighed, then shrugged in unison. “If we can’t find it, then you have to find it on your own”, Winnie said. Roselynn nodded to that sentence. Bella was walking around the room, looking at her classmates playing music, some even going crazy. Bella sighed. Afterward, she found a random door. Her curiosity took over her, so she opened the door, despite it being locked. She had immense strength, perhaps.

She saw a bunch of instruments, all of them looking normal until… she found a box. Yet again, her curiosity took over her mind and she opened it. Inside the box was a dusty, yet shiny trumpet. It was golden yellow. It gave Bella a nice inside feeling. A feeling that she’s destined to play this trumpet. She took the trumpet out of the box and then tip-toed out of the room. She went up to Louise and tapped his shoulder.

“Louise, sir”, Bella politely said. Louise looked back at Bella. “Ah. May I help?”, Louise asked. Bella was hesitant to show it at first, but she showed the trumpet anyways. “Do you know anything about this?”,

she asked as she held up the trumpet. Louise led out a dramatic gasp and pulled the trumpet away. “Don’t hold that thing!”, Louise yelled. “What?! Why!?”, Bella yelled. Louise glared at her then looked away at the ground. “This… this was the former music teacher’s greatest instrument!”, Louise said. Bella held her hands away from her shoulder. Her fists crumbled up. Her eyebrows turned furious while she’s curious. “The former music teacher?!”, she yelled.

“Yup. His name was Mr. Drew. He was once a music teacher around these parts, then he became a full-time musician! The trumpet was his signature and first instrument. This trumpet was the first one he played”, Louise explained. He had blurry yet glimmering eyes while he was explaining. “Were you his assistant?”, Bella asked. She calmed down once he began explaining. “What? No way! I wasn’t even born yet when he quit being a teacher!”, Louise yelled. Bella wasn’t amused by Louise’s yelling. “Well, can I at least try to play a trumpet?”, Bella asked. Louise stared at her, then considered letting her try. “Fine”, Louise sighed. Bella grinned wide. “Besides, I don’t see anyone playing a trumpet here!”, Bella added. “It’s because trumpets aren’t that easy to play”, Louise answered. Bella banged her head around. “How?! You just blow into it and it’ll make music!”, Bella said. “It’s not as easy as you might think”, Louise responded. Quaver came up to the two and puffed up his jacket, then he noticed the trumpet Louise was holding.

“Louise! Why is there Drew’s trumpet?!?!”, Quaver yelled, pulling back the trumpet from Louise’s palm. “Bella took it from somewhere, not me!”, Louise yelled back. “Quaver, do you know where the trumpets are?”, Bella asked. Her eyes turned into those baby-doll eyes. “And why do you want to play a trumpet?”, Quaver asked, pulling his head towards the little girl. She wore an angered smile after he asked that. “Because I want to try a new instrument! I’m done with playing the piano, you know?”, Bella answered. Quaver sighed

then pulled her by her hands. “Fine. I’ll take you there”, Quaver said. Bella squealed.

Meanwhile, Bella’s classmates were bearing witness to all of this. Apparently, Maverick and Mandy already knew where the trumpets were. They were plotting a devious plan as soon as they heard that Quaver, Louise and Bella were going to the trumpets. Being the stealthy prankster that they are, they walked past the trio without anyone even noticing.

“Is it just me or am I hearing whooshing?”, Bella suddenly asked. Maverick and Mandy were hiding under a table when they heard that question. They were electrified. They had to sneak out in a quieter way. “Eh. It’s probably your classmates”, Quaver brushed off. Bella sighed as they continued walking. Bella suddenly felt a shock of something. “Oops! Uh. I think I gotta go!”, Bella exclaimed. Her legs started to panic, so did she. “To where?”, Louise asked. “… To the bathroom!”, she shouted as she ran to the bathroom. Louise and Quaver looked at each other and decided to wait. Maverick and Mandy led out a slight sigh of relief and crawled their way out of the table, then under curtains. They saw the trumpets next door and did a barrel roll that reached them there.

The pranksters, after the rolling, uncurled themselves and hopped up. Once they did, they got their petty little hands into the trumpets. Maverick licked his lips while Mandy keeps curling her fingers. They looked like they found a feast of delicious treats! It metaphorically was for them. Mandy got out something green. Something healthy. It was lettuce! Maverick snickered as Mandy put in lettuce in every single trumpet in the room. Once they heard footsteps that came to the room, they instantly hid under the tables that supported the lettuce-holding trumpets.

“Here they are!”, Quaver announced. Bella’s eyes gleamed in front of the instruments. Louise smiled wide. “Happy now?”, Louise asked. Bella nodded eagerly. Quaver walked up to a specific trumpet. It was shiny and golden, but not as much as Drew’s trumpet. “This one belonged to me and Flax back when we were kids. Ahh. Our spit unfortunately didn’t remain in this bad boy, but that doesn’t matter!”, Quaver said. Bella took it out of Quaver’s hands. “May I play it?”, Bella asked. “Sure. Play it in front of your classmates! You can already play the trumpet, right?”, Quaver asked. Bella pointed her finger at her face and then looked down. “I think I do”, Bella said. Quaver pushed her out of the room. “Alright. Good luck then!”, Quaver wished. Louise followed the two as Quaver continued pushing Bella out of the room.

Maverick and Mandy giggled as they peeked out of the table. They got out and followed the three. However, in the middle of the silent following, Mandy felt something odd. Her nerves were telling her something, but she didn’t know what. She looked behind her, stopping her steps. Maverick noticed and looked at Mandy. “Mandy? What’s the matter?”, Maverick asked. He was only looked at her hair, but that didn’t mean anything to him. “Nothing. Go without me”, Mandy said. Maverick ticked his throat, then decided to listen to her and walk away. Mandy walked towards the trumpet room slowly. She took small steps. Her foot suddenly tickled. The tickle turned into a pins and needles feeling. She didn’t think much of it and continued stepping towards the main table that held a saxophone. Suddenly, the saxophone started playing. Mandy jumped. The jump hurt her foot, which let her trip on herself. She then noticed that the same foot lit up and turned yellow. Pain started arriving to her. “Are you the one?”, an ominous voice came to her. “What?”, she asked. She got up, trying her best to stay strong. “Mandy”, the voice appeared again. She stepped backwards just to face the wall. The saxophone suddenly played again, but it played feint yet familiar music. “Do you remember

me?", the voice sung along with the music. Mandy's eyes widened. Suddenly, light burst out into her. Suddenly, a doll-like hand reached out of the table, dragging Mandy into the underside. She started yelling and crying for help, but that did nothing. Nobody came to her, not even Maverick.

Meanwhile, the door opened with Louise's arm on the handle. "Introducing: Bella! The trumpet player!", Bella announced herself. Everyone took their attention to her and had star eyes. Bella played the trumpet, but it suddenly threw up… lettuce! Pieces of lettuce flying out of the trumpet, jolting out into the air! The students both gasped and laughed. Bella instantly noticed and blushed into red. "Wah! What?!", she exclaimed. She looked at her lettuce mess. It resembled a salad at that point! "Who did this?!", she yelled, pointing at everyone who bit their mouths. Maverick opened the door and did a cat walk. "Mehehehe", he laughed. Bella turned back to see him. She stomped and folded her fists. Suddenly, she punched right into Maverick's lips. "Ouch!", he cried. The new students were afraid once they saw that. They didn't know the students of this minor class could even do things like that on the spot!

"I know you did this, Maverick!", Bella yelled into his ears. "Yeesh! Don't take that so seriously though!", Maverick answered, pushing his palms in front of the girl. Maverick looked around the unamused classroom. "I just want to play the trumpet, then this happens!", Bella gripped Maverick's hand, then snapped it. "AH! HELPP!", he cried. "Stop! Stop! It wasn't even me who put in the lettuce, I was only following who did it!", Maverick confessed. He fell down once he started to. "Then who did?!", Louise asked, stomping. Maverick got up and took a deep breath. "It was Mandy", Maverick said. "But don't ask me where she went. She just said I should leave her alone or

something", he added. Everyone's faces turned into concern once they heard that. The concern was added onto the fact that Mandy cried after she told the story. Bella ignored all of that though and dropped the trumpet. "Why Maverick. Why me?!?!", Bella cried. She fell onto the lettuce. Maverick rolled his pupils and took himself away from Bella. Bella woke up and took the trumpet. Despite having her makeup being smothered in tears, she blew through the trumpet, creating a huge noise, which forced everyone in the room to cover their eyes. Bella cried afterward. She took the lettuce and threw it all over herself, falling down in the process. "It's fine, Bella", Louise assured, sitting down and patting her on her head.

Suddenly, a cry came out, but Bella didn't even open her mouth nor created more tears. "Bella?", Sheldon asked, approaching her while holding his clarinet. "I swear, it wasn't me!", Bella said as she got up. The cry came back. "The heck?", Riley questioned. Violet hugged Riley for protection. "I think I'll search for her myself", Maverick said. Right before he walked out of the door, Quaver blocked the way. "Nuh-uh. Vlad, Paul and Marlyn. Please search for Mandy!", Quaver ordered. The newbies dropped their mouths. Paul turned to be furiously red. "We're not doing this!", Paul answered, pulling his fists together. "We're not even close to inclined to help this student we never even met", Marlyn said. Quaver shrugged their concerns off, being the man that he is.

Then Craig approached Quaver and came up to his ear. "How about I do it?", Craig proposed. Quaver jumped and crossed his arms around the air. "What?! No way!!", he yelled. "You're the last person here I want to get hurt!", he added. Craig put his arms on his forehead, then on his chest. "I know but, we used to do this lots back then, didn't we? I bet we can do better this time!", Craig said. Quaver sighed and pulled Craig to a corner. Louise followed them since he knew it was about the past. "Craig, I told you many times, even back then", Quaver said,

holding Craig's cheeks together. "No—not me. Even Flax kept on telling you! Nobody is saying that you're weak, of course. Your classmates always told me that you've been losing lots of weights since Flax has left the school. Props on that", Quaver added. He sighed right after saying that. "I just… don't want to see you get hurt, especially after what happened between you and Terrance", Quaver said. Louise looked upset. He patted the silent Craig on the back and sighed alongside Quaver. "I feel the same way, dude", Louise said. "But I've got new classmates now. Terrance has been gone for weeks too. I think it's pointless that you're still worried about me when I've grown up", Craig said. "I understand the feeling though…", he added. Craig thought about it more. After thinking, he looked at Quaver's eyes, then at himself. "Fine. I'll let my classmates find Mandy", Craig said. Quaver had a silly smile, but also felt bad that he didn't let Craig get his freedom. "Besides. Flax is still around and wondering about me, right?", Craig questioned before walking back to Renard, Max and Sid. "He sure has matured", Louise chuckled. "He's always mature! At least more than you", Quaver squawked. Louise chuckled even more, but a self-deprecating way.

Once the two walked out of the corner, Jasmine approached them, shivering. "Hi. Uhm", Jasmine stuttered. "Oh, why hello! You must be one of the new students, right?", Quaver politely asked. Jasmine nodded, having a soft smile. "Need any help?", Louise asked. "Kind of. I, uhm, I want some advice on creating music", Jasmine answered. Quaver and Louise widened their eyes and kept on bending their arms towards their mouths. "You see, uhm. Marlyn kept saying that I should talk to, erk, you about music advice. It's because I-I'm good at singing", Jasmine said. Quaver clapped his palms just from hearing that sentence. "Thank you for asking for music advice!", Quaver said. Jasmine smiled, tilting her head towards Quaver's head.

“Of course, we should prioritize your classmate’s well-being first! Who knows whether or not Mandy is fine?”, Quaver asked. Jasmine nodded. “On that note: Let’s get going! Maverick, why don’t you look for her instead. The newbies here are too lazy to go”, Quaver requested. “Of course I will, sir. She **is** my best friend after all!”, Maverick chuckled. He ran out of the door and into the corridor. “As for the rest of you… continue your practice until we get news!” Quaver commanded. Everyone continued to do so. “How about the lettuce?!”, Bella yelled, shaking Quaver’s chest. “I’ll deal with it. You continue playing your piano”, Quaver assured. Bella stomped, but hesitantly continued to play the piano anyways.

Maverick went through the corridor that would lead anyone to the trumpet room. He was wondering why there was even a whole room dedicated to trumpets at all. After a lot of steps and a lot of breaths taken, Maverick saw the door that led to the trumpet room had closed. It was odd. He could’ve sworn it was closed beforehand. Either way, he slightly opened the door and saw the trumpets… without the lettuce! Maverick squealed and jumped. He almost lost his baseball cap because of the jump! Trembling, he continued to walk into the room in tiny steps. He kept looking left and right around the room before he had enough of the fright he felt. He had to walk away, right out of the door.

He got inside the music lesson room. “What’s the matter?”, Quaver asked. Quaver approached Maverick alongside Louise. “I couldn’t find Mandy”, Maverick said. Quaver sighed, even having a facepalm. “Let me guess: You didn’t look anywhere further than the wind instrument room”, Quaver said. Maverick got a bit of a shock from what Quaver said, probably because it was true! “It’s fine”, Quaver assured. He looked at his students and stepped his left foot onto the ground.

“Students! We’ve got a change of plan! Now everyone has to go searching for Mandy! Yes, even you newbies!”, Quaver announced. The students were more than excited to look for Mandy, mainly because they know new mysteries will have to be uncovered! Everyone ran out of the door, dropping their instruments in unison. Quaver stopped them though. “Ah-ah-ah! First: everyone has to team up! Teamwork **does** make the dream work after all”, Quaver snickered. Everyone sighed with their tired eyes.

Everyone sat on their usual seats in the music room. Quaver walked in circles for a while until he came up with the teams. “Aha! So, first…”

“Nadia and Violet. Bruno and Vlad. Sid and Spencer. Max and Connor. Marlyn and Winnie. Sarah and Carly. Roselynn and Sheldon. Alex and Bella. Riley and Craig, and finally, Renard and Paul”, Quaver said.

Jasmine tapped Quaver’s shoulder, which caught his attention. “What about me and Maverick?”, she asked. Quaver licked his finger and straightened his hair. “I know you two are missing. It’s because Maverick is going on his own. After all, Mandy is his best friend. Meanwhile, you’re staying with me since you did want those music tips and advice. Louise will help”, Quaver explained. Jasmine smiled and nodded. “Ok!”, Jasmine said. “Now everyone… Split up!”, Quaver exclaimed. Everyone ran out of the door. Maverick was the only one who was frantically running, possibly because of his concerns from earlier.

Chapter 7

Unfortunate Team-Up

Bruno watched as he saw his new friend walk with Bella, the dramatic girl. He sighed in disbelief. He was more in disbelief after seeing his partner, Vlad. While he might've just met Vlad the day before, he knew that something rotten was going on with the vampire boy.

"Say, do you have any opinions on your favorite cheese?", the boy suddenly asked. Bruno shook his head. "What? My favorite cheese?", Bruno asked. "Yep. My favorite is mozzarella. It's just so good! How about yours?", Vlad asked. Bruno tilted his head with his eyebrows almost closing down. *Is Vlad trying to befriend me?* Bruno was wondering. It's truly odd. One second Vlad was a bully, then the other he acts like he's your best buddy. This is not the first nor last time he'll ever act this way though.

"Uhm. My favorite cheese is cheddar, I guess", Bruno said in a soft tone. "Ah! Not a bad choice!", Vlad giggled. Vlad looked around the room. "By the way, did you know we're in a bad situation right now?", Bruno asked with an angered tone. Vlad giggled some more. "I know! I just want to lighten up the mood, you know?", Vlad said. Bruno didn't want to listen nor even look at his face though. "Plus, I just want to get to know you too. I mean, we just met yesterday!", Vlad added on. Bruno puts his finger on his mouth, then shrugged. *He's not wrong. I **did** just meet him.*

Vlad twirled his fairly curly hair around. "I've heard that you've fallen in love with some Class 3 girls too", Vlad suddenly said. Bruno jumped in a shock. "What?! Which girls? I don't even know anyone in that class!", Bruno cried. "Blossom? Maybe Jasmine too", Vlad answered.

Bruno's eyes begun to twitch. "Blossom? That girl who's obsessed with flowers and one of the two who wanted to steal my lunch money for no reason? No way!", Bruno yelled. The two stopped walking right after he said that. "We're not talking about that, are we?", Vlad frowned as he said that. He creepily turned his head towards the yelling Bruno. "I mean—I—nevermind", Bruno stuttered. "Well, she kept saying that you kept blushing whenever you and her are in the bus", Vlad responded. "Dude, I always blush when I'm around girls. I don't even like or care about her! I don't even want to have a relationship with her!", Bruno continued to yell. Vlad shut Bruno's mouth with his entire palm.

"Stop yelling, please. You're gonna disrupt our classmate's search", Vlad sighed. Bruno inhaled then exhaled. "Fine", Bruno said. He continued walking, Vlad soon following. *I don't even want to have a relationship with Vlad and his group.* Bruno thought thoroughly to himself about that group. Suddenly, he begun to remember what Alex said to him—about how everyone in the group were raised by criminals. Bruno took a glance at the upset-looking Vlad, then looked down at the ground, looking to be as upset as Vlad.

The two eventually found a room to something. It was actually a storage room for janitors. They brushed it off at first, but then Bruno noticed something shining. "Huh? What's that?", Bruno asked. He walked towards it. The shining object was placed on the third place of the shelf. The shelf was huge though, so it wasn't easy to take the object out of the shelf. Vlad walked up to Bruno. Bruno took the object out and found a mirror with a picture of someone. "What? Who's that? Do **you** know, Vlad?", Bruno asked. He showed Vlad that, hoping that Vlad would know. "Nope, I don't", Vlad said.

Bruno took a deep sigh and took the mirror back. “Well, did you see anyone looking like this in the school?”, Bruno asked. Vlad wanted to ignore it at first, but the more he looked at the picture, the more he noticed that the person in the picture was familiar. The person in question was a little girl who had chubby cheeks but a thin body. The girl has black, curly hair and had purely black eyes. She even had tiny freckles! The picture was the girl in a snow place. Nothing too out of the ordinary, yes? “No. It can’t be her, right?”, Vlad whispered to herself, snatching the mirror away from Bruno. “Her who?”, Bruno asked.

Vlad started sweating, then looked at Bruno. “You see… I… I think this is Mandy”, Vlad said. Then he scratched his hair. “But at the same time, this could be anyone!”, Vlad added. He kept looking more and more into the picture. “The snow… The eyes…”, Vlad kept saying to himself. He turned back to see behind the mirror. Behind it was a Canadian flag and a note writing “FOR MAVERICK JAMES”.

Vlad’s eyes widened and dropped the mirror, breaking it. “Vlad!”, Bruno yelled. Bruno picked up the mirrors and the remaining pieces of it. “I-It can’t be Mandy!”, Vlad shivered. “Why is that so important anyways?”, Bruno asked. Vlad froze for a moment, then puts his arms together. “Uh. I don’t know”, Vlad shrugged. Bruno facepalmed. “That whole thing was worth a mirror, you know”, Bruno said. He left the mirror on the table nearby, with the shattered pieces beside it. “Come on, let’s go”, Bruno commanded. The two got out of the room. Little did they know that there was a subtle Canadian flag behind the mirror.

The two continued their walk through the corridor then found the shadows of someone. “Eek!”, Bruno squealed. Then the shadow reveals a girl that ran to Bruno’s arms. It was Nadia! “Brunooo!”, she

cried. “Nadia?!”, Bruno exclaimed. He pushed her aside. “Nadia, what happened?”, Bruno asked. In the background, Vlad was rolling his eyes, preparing for wishy-washy romance. Nadia looked around, only looking back to see Bruno’s “handsome” face. “Ah, nothing much”, Nadia brushed off, being infatuated by her perception of Bruno. “All… right?”, he accepted with confusion. Bruno went with Vlad as they continued searching for the girl. Nadia jumped on Bruno though.

“BRUNO! DON’T LEAVE”, she yelled. “AH! Why is everyone yelling today?!”, Vlad complained. Bruno sighed and facepalmed. “How many times do I have to tell you this, Nadia? Ever since we were kids”, Bruno asked. Nadia hissed away and got up, so did Bruno. “I just don’t want to get hurt, and I bet Violet won’t protect me!”, Nadia said. Bruno kept on shaking Nadia. “Nadia! Violet is entirely capable of protecting herself, why can’t she protect **you**!?”, Bruno said. Vlad was watching all of this, wondering *“Are the girls in this class always this weird?”*.

Suddenly, footsteps came from the distance. “Nadia!!!!”, a shout came from the same distance. Violet came! She came with a battle-ready stance. “Violet! Ugh! Let me stay with my boyfriend!”, Nadia begged. “Boyfriend!?”, Bruno exclaimed. “Nadia, we’re just friends!”, he added. Nadia prepared her fists, but for reasons nobody except herself knew. “See, Nadia? Even he said that you and him are just friends”, Violet said. “Please, let’s just search for Mandy now. That’s more i-important”. Nadia sighed and huffed. She hugged Bruno tightly, but he pushed her away. “Nadia”, Violet stomped. Nadia gulped. “Fine”, she hissed. Nadia and Violet walked back to their path, with Violet completely ignoring that the boys were even there. Bruno looked at Vlad with an awkward face while Vlad looked like he just wants to be done with all of this.

Vlad then hears something from the far distance. “Did you hear that?”, Vlad asked. Bruno shook his head. The noise was that of a laughing child. “I think that’s Mandy!”, Vlad said. Vlad walked towards the source of the sound, but Bruno didn’t. “Bruno?”, Vlad asked. He turned back just to see a mad Bruno. “Come on dude”, Vlad sighed. “I know how it feels to have a forced girlfriend but—“.

“What? I’m not upset because of that. I’m not even upset”, Bruno said. Vlad dropped his face. “Then why aren’t you following me?”, Vlad asked. Bruno stood up and followed Vlad. “Look, I don’t know how you expect a person like me to trust you easily”, Bruno said. Vlad cleared his throat, then pushed Bruno in front of him. “Need some proof? Then let your ears show you it”, Vlad said. Bruno huffed. He put his ears towards the source, then heard it. “Oh…”, Bruno said in awe. Vlad laughed with his suddenly croaky throat which was just clean earlier.

The two hesitantly walked towards the source, however, the source in itself led to a mysterious dark hallway. “Erk! This is why I didn’t trust you!”, Bruno said. Vlad patted Bruno on the back. “So what? It’s just a dark hallway, but I guess I shouldn’t be surprised from a scaredy-cat like you”, Vlad laughed. Bruno turned extremely red and went on fire. Vlad ignored him anyways. Bruno soon followed Vlad. The two eventually reached the end, but they were out of the school and… the path led to a cliff that emitted light. When looking down, Bruno and Vlad found a mysterious beam of light from somewhere. They looked at each other, and decided to hide in place just in case anyone who actually knew about the light came in or someone began to investigate it.

Chapter 8

The Doll

In a dark room, Mandy was sitting in a tied-up chair. The person who was tied up was her. She let her eyes opened wide as she looked around the pitch-dark cube. The only light source present was a light bulb that was the size of a mouse. The only thing Mandy could even feel was her wooden chair, and she only heard its creaking and crackling sounds. She kept on moving and trying to drift from the chair, but couldn't.

Suddenly, a sight was seen. It was the shadow of what looks like a dwarf. That shadow turned into a person. A tiny person. The person had skin made of knitted yarns filled with rust and dust. The mouth had stitches strapped onto the lips. The person had hair made of plastic strings and had shoes made of pure plastic and brown paint. The person wore a gorgeous green and pink gown made of cloth. However, that person didn't look like a person for it was constantly smiling for no reason. Its movements were robotic-like, moving in a slow and uncanny rate. There was no doubt that this "person" isn't even a living thing. It was only a thing.

"Hello Mandy Smith", the thing greeted.

Mandy saw her eyes open even wider as she saw the thing move around the room. Its legs stepped in a soldier-like manner. "Hello", Mandy greeted back. Mandy kept on flailing her feet around. "Could you get me out of here?", she politely asked. The thing turned her head to Mandy, without even moving her body. It started laughing

hysterically all of a sudden. “You petty fool! First you abandoned me then you do this!?”, the thing pointed at Mandy. Mandy kept blinking her eyelashes. She wanted to get her knuckles ready but couldn’t at that moment. “What do you mean?”, Mandy asked. She gritted her teeth soon enough. “Did you forget? Did you forget that tale you made up?”, the thing asked. It walked around in circles around Mandy. It was a shark in the water, while Mandy was the poor soul waiting to get saved. “The tale?”, Mandy asked. She mentally snapped her fingers afterward. “Ah, right! The one I told my classmates about”, she realized.

Mandy took a glance at the thing, then started realizing what it truly was. It wasn’t a person. It was her doll! “Molly?!”, Mandy exclaimed. Her shock was so harsh that she ripped the ropes away. Apparently, those ropes were so weak that it could break just from jumping! “Hah! You finally remembered!”, Molly laughed. “Stop being cryptic! I already know who you are!”, Mandy pushed Molly away. “Then explain why you didn’t recognize me earlier”, Molly asked. Molly’s shoes stepped onto her ground.

Mandy blew her left out strand away as she said, “Because there’s so many of you, that’s why!”. “Besides, since when did you get possessed?”, Mandy asked right after. Molly laughed and laughed. “Ever since **you** threw me in the trash”, Molly stated as it pushed Mandy back into her wooden chair. “So, you’re blaming **me** for my own ? I mean, you’re not wrong, I did deserve the karma, but the karma doesn’t have to be me!”, Mandy said. Molly didn’t mind Mandy’s anger. In fact, it used Mandy’s anger to strap her into place. “Boo-hoo, I couldn’t care less”, Molly hissed. It walked away from the trapped again Mandy. She had a deep sigh to herself.

“Man, I sure have messed up…”, she thought to herself.

As soon as silence arose, Maverick jumped from the roof which was apparently made of glasses. “Mandy!”, Maverick yelled. Mandy gasped and teared up. “Mav!”, she yelled back. Mandy broke the straps again by jumping and falling into Maverick’s body. She was hugging him tightly, making him blush. The two then hopped up as soon as Maverick realized where Mandy was the entire time.

“Mandy! What is this place?!”, he yelled. “I don’t know, but we have to get out!”, Mandy said. She kept shaking Maverick’s shoulder. Maverick nodded, then looked around the room for an exit. He couldn’t find one until he found a hammer. “Aha!”, Maverick chuckled. Maverick ran to the hammer and gripped it. Once he did though, the thing came up to the two. “MANDY!”, the thing shouted. “Eek! Molly!”, Mandy cried and hid behind Maverick. “Molly?!”, Maverick exclaimed. He shook his mind away from his confusion and just got ready to fight.

“Ugh! Get away from Mandy!”, he kept flapping his arms while yelling. “You don’t even know who I am, do you?”, Molly asked. Maverick tilted his head at her. “What do you mean?”, Maverick asked. Molly punched Maverick. Despite having wool-knitted arms, the punch was harsh. “You must be Mandy’s new best friend!”, Molly yelled. Maverick twitched his eye and kept on looking back at Mandy in confusion. “Mandy’s new best friend? I thought Mandy never had a best friend!”, Maverick responded. Then he got kicked on the head by Molly. She got her fists ready for a last punch while Maverick was on the ground. “Any last words, strong boy?”, Molly asked, then laughed. “Ergh”, Maverick groaned as he got up, making Molly gasp, then smile like a maniac.

“Molly, you’ve gone crazy”, Mandy said. “So you do know this Molly girl”, Maverick said, chuckling a bit. “Molly isn’t a girl. She isn’t even a human”, Mandy replied. Maverick’s legs made him jump in shock. “She’s a doll”, Mandy added. Maverick quickly realized this soon after

Mandy said that. “Then… then…”, Maverick stuttered. Molly continued her maniacal laughter. “Mandy was feeding you and your classmates lies!”, Molly said. Mandy sighed. “Molly, stop talking to Maverick like that. You don’t even know him nor my classmates!”, Mandy said as she pushed Molly away. Molly turned furiously red, afterward pushing her so hard that she hit Maverick, letting the two of them falling down like dominos. Molly stomped forward to the two and crossed her arms. “Amazing how the fairy tale ends. It’s a happily ever after!”, Molly laughed.

Once Molly got her body ready to attack the duo, a boy pounced and tackled the doll. It was Vlad who did so. He kept on punching and beating the doll up. Meanwhile, Bruno approached the duo. “Guys!”, Bruno exclaimed. Bruno got the two of them up. “Thanks Bruno!”, Mandy smiled. “I guess Vlad too”, she added, looking at Vlad viciously fighting. “Oh, you don’t need to thank us. We’re just being great classmates”, Vlad responded with a silly smile. Mandy giggled while Maverick rolled his pupils away from the boy.

Despite Vlad’s efforts, Molly broke the wall with the hammer Maverick left and ran away. “No! Ugh!”, Vlad groaned. “Come on, stinkers! We’ve got to fight!”, Vlad encouraged the others. He ran to follow the doll, so did the others.

While they were running, Bruno turned his head to Maverick, prepared to open his mouth. “Right. Maverick, I and Vlad saw something with your name on it”, Bruno said to Maverick. He gasped. “Oh really? Heh”, Maverick chuckled. “Yup. It was a picture of, who I assume is Mandy”, Bruno added. Maverick lowered his eyebrows, then looked at Mandy who wasn’t paying attention to anything the boys said at all. Maverick was wondering what that could mean.

Meanwhile, Max and Connor were walking out of the school's fields. "Are you sure this is safe?", Connor asked. "Affirmative", Max answered with a smile. Connor's mouth turned upside down once he heard that. Then, they approached a giant ravine. It was filled with great green leaves and bundled amounts of rocks and dirt. Being new students of the branch, Max and Connor were stunned by the sight of that, especially when considering the fact that it's right beside a school. The two were only bounded by the steep edge of the ravine.

"Wow! I don't remember this in our old school!", Connor exclaimed. Max looked around the ravine, both afraid and curious, practically being amused. "01010100 01101000 01101001 01110011 00100000 01101001 01110011 00101110 00101110 00101110 00100000 01100001 01101101 01100001 01111010 01101001 01101110 01100111", Max pumped out as his eyes sparkled. Connor looked at him with dead eyes. "What did… what was that?", Connor asked. Max stared at Connor, then chuckled. "Oops. Got a bit crazy there!", Max awkwardly said. He looked away from Connor, seemingly hiding something inside of him.

Soon enough, Connor saw Vlad and a doll running straight to them. "Max! Watch out!", Connor yelled out as he pushed himself and Max away from the running two. Once they reached where Connor and Max were, Vlad and the doll were beating each other with their fists. Connor and Max got up, looking puzzled. Eventually, Bruno, Maverick and Mandy came while panting. "What's going on?!", Max exclaimed. "It's complicated!", Mandy responded.

Suddenly, the doll pushed Vlad far into the air, making him land onto Bruno. Then the doll stood up and raised her arms, chanting something peculiar.

“O’ far friend, will thy save me from the painful doom that is the end of our lives? O’ far friend, can you see me, can you feel me? Send me the spirits of all that’s whole”, the doll chanted.

All of a sudden, a portal spawned in the blink of an eye. Everyone gasped. Max was about to tackle the doll, but she got away to the portal beforehand, letting Max just fall onto the muddy ground. “Oh yeah. I forgot about something”, the doll smiled. It got out of the portal which size was slowly decreasing. Then the doll pulled Mandy by the leg, letting her trip on the ground and making her cry. “Mandy!”, Maverick yelled. He pulled her by her arm, subsequently letting him follow Mandy and the doll. “I’m taking you back to your home, Mandy! Our home!”, the doll shouted. Mandy closed her eyes and shut her mouth.

When the doll fell into the portal, Mandy let go of it, only holding onto Maverick. Maverick was only holding onto the edge of the portal, in between it and the real world. “Ergh. Mandy, I—“, Maverick grunted. Mandy looked down, then at Maverick’s panicking eye. “Let go”, Mandy said. “What?! I can’t!”, Maverick shouted. Connor was about to pull Maverick by his hand. “Wait! Connor…”, Maverick stopped Connor. Connor began to tear up with his soft frown. “Let go of us!”, Maverick said. “But Maverick! Will you—“. Bruno’s sentence got cut off by Maverick saying, “It doesn’t matter! I’d rather go down with Mandy than see her go”, Maverick said. Mandy smiled while Maverick said that. Connor sobbed, thoroughly listening to Maverick and letting him and Mandy go. “I’m sorry Maverick!”, Connor apologized as the portal closed. Connor cried into Max’s shoulder. “Gee, this sure is getting tough”, Vlad said. Bruno only stared at where the portal was. *“Make it out alive, for the world”*, Bruno hoped in his mind.

Everyone else was set to tell the remaining members of the class and the teachers about this.

Chapter 9

The World of The Undead

In the real world, Bruno, Vlad, Max and Connor were running back to the music classroom. Everyone was apparently there, which meant that nobody had any luck finding the duo, at least as much as the four.

“How unfortunate for you all”, Quaver sighed, giving a disappointing look-away from everyone. Then he noticed the four entering the room, some panting. “Quaver! Quaver! We just got important information!”, Bruno said. “Actually, we did find Mandy”, Vlad said. Everyone gasped. “Well, where is she? And where’s Maverick?”, Quaver asked. Everyone in that group were sweating. The sweats were like waterfalls, flowing down the mountains that are the kids. “That’s the thing…”, Connor said. “You might not believe this, but I’ve got video footage”, Max said.

“You see, they’ve gone missing to a portal to someplace!”, he added. Quaver raised an eyebrow on that. Louise even approached to the case. “I think it’s best if I inform this matter to Mrs. Garcia”, Quaver said. “Me and Louise are going to have a class to teach soon”. Everyone was fine with that. Max took a camera out of his pocket and then showed it to Quaver and Louise. “We’ll take note of this”, Quaver said as he took the camera.

Quaver and Louise got out of the room. “Class is dismissed!”, Quaver announced while walking out. The students were looking at each other. “Eeee! New mystery to solve!”, Winnie shouted in excitement. The girls were giggling at each other.

In another, completely different world…

A world where the night is always present. No sun exists; therefore, daytime doesn't exist either.

A world where everyone floats. A world where houses are created with pure creativity in mind.

A world where the ground is made of only concrete and clouds.

A world where living means you're dead and vice versa.

Maverick woke up in the concrete floor. "Ugh. Where's the grass?", Maverick moaned. He slowly got up and saw Mandy, looking at the city with a serious face. "Mandy?", Maverick asked. He then looked at the same city Mandy was looking at. "Woah! Is this… Is this New York!?", Maverick exclaimed and smiled. Mandy frowned, looking at Maverick's smile. "It isn't. This is Toronto", Mandy corrected. Maverick's smile turned into a concerned frown. "Toronto? Weren't we just in New York?", Maverick asked. Mandy didn't answer though. His brain refreshed right after viewing the city.

"Molly! Where is she?", Maverick asked. Mandy sighed, then looked at him. "In my house", Mandy said. Maverick tilted his head, looking at the neighborhood right beside the duo. "Your house?", Maverick asked. Mandy kept her silence and walked away. The two took a walk through the neighborhood, finally finding a specific house. "Here we are. Molly is probably here", Mandy said. Maverick looked at Mandy with his crazy hair. The two entered the empty house full of nothing. The house absolutely had no furniture, not even dust! Maverick had enough of the cryptic stuff.

“Ugh! Mandy! Can’t you just… tell me!? Where are we?!”, Maverick yelled as soon as he snapped. Mandy was silent, then took a deep sigh.

“Maverick. I… I…”, Mandy stuttered while tearing up.

“I’m the girl from the tale!”, Mandy admitted.

Maverick gasped, widening his eyes. “I’m a ghost, Maverick. I’m not alive!”, Mandy cried.

“You see. I was that innocent little girl. And Molly? Molly was that possessed doll I abandoned”, Mandy confessed. “And before you ask: I was given a body that I can possess in order to live a normal life as a girl. I possessed a New Yorker’s body for some odd reason. One day, my parents adopted me and raised me as their only child”, Mandy explained.

“So you’re dead this entire time?”, Maverick asked. Mandy nodded, peeking out of her window. “I… had an incredible life. That so-called tale… it truly described my life back then well enough”, Mandy said. She looked back at Maverick and smiled. “But I must admit, this new life is just as good!”, Mandy said. Maverick led out a slight smile on his face. “Why did you hide your secret anyways?”, Maverick asked. Mandy looked at the skies again. “I don’t want to be the alien. I don’t want to see everyone running away, scared from me. I want to live as a normal girl again”, Mandy answered. Maverick approached Mandy. “I see…”, Maverick said. Mandy suddenly hugged Maverick and cried. “I’m so sorry about everything, Maverick!”, Mandy cried. Maverick patted her on the back and hugged her back. “It’s gonna be fine”, Maverick assured.

Suddenly, a sound banged into the door. Then the banging turned into a wide-open door that flung to the wall. “Why hello, Mandy!”, Molly greeted. “Molly!”, Mandy screamed. Maverick pulled Mandy

impulsively. They ran upstairs, away from Molly. They hid in a bedroom. It was Mandy's bedroom, it seems. "Maverick…", Mandy panted. Maverick led out a sigh of relief. "Well, at least we can take a breather here!", Maverick said. His light-hearted nature turned into darkness as he remembered why he even followed Mandy in the first place. He looked at the fake wooden floor, frowning.

"Mav?", Mandy asked. Maverick rubbed his shoulder, then looked at Mandy. "Listen, Mandy. I know we're in grave danger right now and we're going to die soon… or die again for you, but!", Maverick said. "I must admit… I'm… lonely…", Maverick confessed. Mandy frowned as her eyebrows came down to her. "Heh. I guess that's **my** confession", Maverick chuckled. "I must admit. If I did have any other friends, then I wouldn't have followed you. I really have to admit", Maverick said. "But it doesn't mean you're worthless or anything—that's just the way I am", he added. Mandy pointed her fingertips at her chin. "Why are you lonely anyways, huh?", Mandy asked. Maverick shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe it's because I'm a prankster and pranksters are intolerable to everyone in my school, even in my old one. Hell, you're the second friend I ever had! The first one was… hmm… I forgot…", Maverick said. Mandy chuckled afterward and then went up to him by crawling. "I guess we really are more similar than I thought!", Mandy laughed. Maverick laughed alongside her. "Guess so!", he replied.

After a long moment of silence, the two realized that Molly was most probably gone. "Hey, I think we're safe to go now", Maverick suggested. Mandy nodded. The two got out of the door, slowly. They even tip-toe their way into the stairs and saw there was nobody. Molly did leave! However, they still had to confront her somehow.

“Hmm… Since Molly is technically a ghost… she probably has her own house here…”, Mandy said. Maverick put his arms behind his head. “Are you saying that anyone who died here has a house of their own?”, Maverick asked. Mandy nodded. “I won’t even share this house with my family”, she added. Maverick straightened his arms and stood still once he heard that. “Well, I guess we’re going to Molly’s house! I think I remember it. Just follow me”, Mandy said. The two walked out of the door and locked it, even though everyone could walk through walls in that world.

Chapter 10

Confront A Doll

Back in the real world, everyone in Class 2 (including Mrs. Garcia) approached the ravine. Bruno pointed right into where the portal once was. “Over here!”, Bruno pointed out. Mrs. Garcia observed the area, then at the bottom of the ravine, which wasn’t too far from where the portal was. The portal was only a few centimeters on the bottom of the ravine’s grassy edge. “How did it spawn again?”, Mrs. Garcia asked. “Didn’t you see the video?”, Max asked. Mrs. Garcia snapped her finger and remembered by then. “Yup! I remember now!”, Mrs. Garcia answered. “Max, would you mind giving me the camera for a moment?”, she asked.

Max took out the same camera as before. Mrs. Garcia grabbed it, before looking through the pictures and videos filmed and shot on it. Once she found the video, she fast-forwards it to the time where the chant was being casted. She finally found it and played the video.

“O’ far friend, will thy save me from the painful doom that is the end of our lives? O’ far friend, can you see me, can you feel me? Send me the spirits of all that’s whole”, Molly chanted.

Mrs. Garcia paused the video for a moment, then kept on hearing it again and again. “Students! All of you, chant for the sake of your classmates!”, Mrs. Garcia commanded. The students jumped in utter shock. “Chant? Like a cult!?”, Connor exclaimed. “Not like a cult, just say the words! I bet the portal will disappear if all of you do so”, Mrs. Garcia responded. Once she rewatched the video yet again, she noticed that it really was only Molly who chanted it. Still, she wanted to see her students collectively chant out a spell, until she came up

with an idea. She paused the video and then looked at the new students. “You. All four of you. Chant what this thing said”, Mrs. Garcia commanded them. She slowly approached them with her toes, all of them gulping. “If you want us to, miss”, Paul sighed. The four new students stood in front of everyone. Jasmine looked behind, then Marlyn pulled her back to shape. The four stared down at the bottom of the ravine and then closed their eyes. Mrs. Garcia started to play the video.

“O’ far friend, will thy save me from the painful doom that is the end of our lives? O’ far friend, can you see me, can you feel me? Send me the spirits of all that’s whole”, all four chanted alongside Molly in the background.

The portal spawned! Everyone with their naked eyes walked and saw it. Well, naked for those without glasses. “A portal?! How weird can this school get?!”, Bella dramatically shouted. The newbies were all shell shocked in the meantime. They never expected that their first day of being out of their classes would be like this! Perhaps their initial negative judgement of the class was wrong. “Come on. Go on”, Riley encouraged. The four sighed, then inhaled as they fell into the portal. Then they fell into the rocks! Of course, they got to the portal, but not without some bruises on the way! The portal closed before anyone from the four got left out. Everyone was watching, hoping for the best for the newbies. “Do you really think this is a good idea, miss?”, Craig asked Mrs. Garcia. The teacher was thinking about it and sighed. “I hope so…”, she said.

Meanwhile, the two were walking to Molly’s house. “You know Maverick, you’re technically dead now”, Mandy said. Maverick gasped. “What do you mean!?”, he exclaimed. Mandy chuckled. “You see, if you go through the portal that leads to this world, that means

you've died and turned into a ghost! Don't worry though, you'll be alive when we get back!", Mandy explained and assured. Maverick took a deep sigh of relief after hearing that, glad that he isn't actually dead. Suddenly, the two saw a black, tilted looking house. It looked like it was a pancake that was so tall, it was close to falling! "Is this it?", Maverick asked. Mandy nodded with determination. The two walked into the garden that led to the front door of the house. They opened it—or walked past it.

"Molly?", Mandy asked. Maverick slowly closed the creaking door. Once it shut, some shadows burst out of nowhere. "Who are you to come here, uninvited?!", one of the shadows interrogated the two. The two gulped, then scratched themselves for a second. "We're just here to see Molly", Maverick answered. The shadow-figure huffed. "Bad excuse", it responded. "WHAT?!", Maverick yelled. The shadow figure punched Maverick in the guts, but oddly not as hard as the woolen-made doll. Mandy kicked the two of the other shadow-figures in a spin. The two suddenly started a fight between them and the shadow figures.

Meanwhile, Molly was watching them with her giant grin on her face. She was hidden in the shadows. The shadows as dark as space, which she was engulfed in. Memories started to flash before her very eyes. Memories of her and Mandy playing with each other, then being thrown in the trash as if she was nothing. Molly was unconscious at the time of being with Mandy, but came to life soon after she was trashed. Molly not only witnessed Mandy's death and memorial, but also other people's lives and deaths. The one that meant most to Molly was Mandy's though.

Oddly enough, Molly also knew how Mandy turned her backstory into a fairy tale. Molly thought she was violated because of that. Molly's tragic tale being turned into a silly story? No way for her!

Molly's guards were tough enough to pull the duo down. Mandy looked into Molly's unexpressive eyes as she walked towards the two who were trapped in the ground thanks to the guard. "Molly", Mandy said. Molly snickered without saying a word. Molly glared at Maverick, then walked away, back to the stairs. "Finish them", Molly commanded. The guards nodded and let go, letting their fists ready. However, they were stopped…

A kick came to a guard's face. It was Paul's leg who kicked him. Indeed, the new students came to the rescue! "Newbies!", Maverick smiled. The new students tackled all of Molly's minions, allowing the duo to run out and follow Molly through the stairs. Molly, who was sitting beside her desk, drinking tea, hears the duo's steps. They eventually came to Molly's room, which was the entire second floor. "So, Molly. It looks like all your plans have been unsuccessful", Mandy said. Molly dropped her hot tea to the floor, only holding onto the same position she had when she was holding the teacup. "How did you get here?!", Molly yelled in denial. Maverick snickered. "Our classmates—specifically the newbies", Maverick answered with his signature snark. Molly was going ablaze. Her stomps turned into jumped right into Maverick's chest, letting him fall into the fall right beside the stairs. "You ruined my chances of even seeing Mandy as a friend again!", Molly accused. "What? I don't even know you exist", Maverick answered. Molly ferociously looked at Mandy, later getting up and curling her fingers up. "You… YOU DIDN'T TELL ANYONE BEFORE TODAY?!", Molly shouted. "I just… I want to keep it as a secret, Molly", Mandy said. Mandy tripped on the nail that held a wooden plank. "Eep!", Mandy cried. She looked at Molly, filled with tears. Then Mandy heard the war that was occurring between the newbies and the guards. It was at that moment, Maverick pointed at the only window that existed in the house. "Look! A butterfly outside!",

Maverick pointed. Molly believed Maverick and looked out of the window. “BUTTERFLY!”, Molly laughed and ran to the window, just to find out that there was none in middle of running.

Suddenly, Paul tackled her on the tummy. “Ow!”, Molly gulped. “Got you”, Paul smiled. The other newbies came into the room, then to Molly with Maverick and Mandy. “Ugh! I so will get you!”, Molly threatened. Everyone laughed. “It’s all talk and no show, huh!”, Marlyn said. “Stop quoting the latest Chef’s Kiss song, Marlyn”, Vlad commented in the background. Molly got up and then pushed them by her sheer power. “If you want me to show you, then I WILL!”, Molly shouted. Everyone squealed afterward.

“STOP!”, Mandy commanded. The girl woke up from the floor and came up close to Molly. “Molly… this… this is going too far! It’s fine if you’re mad at me for abandoning you, but hurting others isn’t the way to go about it, trust me!”, Mandy said. “Yeah, I may be an innocent girl-turned snide prankster, but it doesn’t mean I don’t know the difference between right and wrong”, she added. Molly bit her mouth once she heard that. Molly, nor anyone, ever heard or expected those words from such a girl with that personality. Molly tried to resist those words and punched Mandy, only to see her dodge the punch. Then Mandy stopped Molly from even moving her fists by holding onto it with immense strength. “I’ll let it go if you stop!”, Mandy threatened. Molly squeaked. “I’ll stop, I’ll stop!”, Molly cried. Mandy smiled, then let go. Everyone stood up at that point. “Now… get us back to the real world”, Mandy requested. Molly pointed her eyebrows downwards, then looked back at Mandy. “Fine”, Molly sighed.

Molly stood in front of the window, then looked back at Mandy. “She changed, didn’t she?”, Molly asked. Then Molly looked out the

window, which she doesn't usually do. She took in all the view. The view of Toronto. Her eyes were fed by the beautiful sight. She began to remember all the extraordinary memories of her and Mandy just enjoying life for what it's worth. They were living life to the fullest. Their story may not have a happy ending, but it doesn't mean that can't change. It certainly changed for the better for Mandy. Perhaps it could also change for Molly for once.

"So? What are you waiting for?", Vlad asked. Molly cleared her throat and chuckled. "Right!", Molly responded. She gulped, then smiled.

"O' far friend, will thy save me from the painful doom that is the end of our lives? O' far friend, can you see me, can you feel me? Send me the spirits of all that's whole", Molly chanted.

"Thanks, Molly", Mandy thanked. The four were walking to the portal, with Molly following through. "By the way, how did you guys get here?", Maverick asked while walking towards the portal. Jasmine had a chuckle to hold back while the others had silly smiles. "Oh, it's a long story", Paul said. Everyone went back to the real world.

Chapter 11

Happily Ever After

Finally, everyone returned back to the real world. Home to the majority of those who came back. “Guys!”, everyone exclaimed. Everyone hugged each other, while Molly was left out. She continued to hold her smile though, just for Mandy. Molly went up to Mandy’s ear once everyone let go of the duo. “Psst. I’ve got an offer”, Molly said. Mandy pushed herself back from Molly. “What offer?”, Mandy asked. Molly smiled.

“Shall I…

Bring you back to life?”, Molly asked.

Mandy gasped, widening and twitching her eyes. “You can?”, Mandy asked. Molly nodded with eagerness. Mandy’s mind was racing. It was running and running through its ideas and memories and everything else. Mandy put her palm close to her hand, close to almost biting her fingernails. “Don’t worry! It won’t hurt. It just means you’ll be human again!”, Molly said. Everyone else were shocked in the background—except for Maverick. “What do you mean!?”, Violet exclaimed. Mandy sighed and explained everything in detail. About how she’s the girl from the story and how she’s dead. Everyone was obviously at a lost for words. “Now? Do you want to return to living? It’s just the last thing I could do as an apology”, Molly said. “An apology?”, Mandy asked. Mandy smiled afterward and chuckled. “I don’t know, I just so happen to got back to my senses—if I had any”, Molly chuckled. “So?”, Molly followed up.

Mandy tipped her toes and kept on looking back and forth between her classmates and Molly. She then looked at the sky, then at the environment surrounding her. Finally, she looked at herself. Her hands, her toes and felt her hair. She felt… an odd feeling she didn't feel after she died. It was a nostalgic feeling inside of her.

"No", Mandy declined.

Maverick's jaws dropped. "Mandy. Didn't you just say you wanted to be human?", Maverick asked. Mandy turned back to look at everyone, then wore a soft grin. "I already am human. I feel like I'm a human!", Mandy answered. Molly smiled even more. "Good choice then!", Molly responded. "Well, I must go now. I'll… try to apologize to all my victims now", Molly said. Everyone stared at Molly with sweating. "How many victims do you even have?", Sheldon asked. "256", Molly answered. While that may be a number less than a half of thousand, that's still a lot of people! Many would even be children. Molly spawned the portal again and took a last glance at everyone. "Goodbye, I guess", Molly waved. Mandy waved back and smiled. The portal closed, thus sealing Molly's goodbye for a long time.

Everyone looked at Mandy, happy to see her again. "Well, that was truly odd!", Mrs. Garcia said. She sighed afterward. "Man. This really is one of my weirdest batches of student too", she whispered to herself. Luckily, nobody listened to what she said. "What?", Nadia asked.

Suddenly, Bella slapped Mandy right in the cheek! "You should pay for the trumpets!", Bella yelled. Mandy jumped. "Oh shoot! I almost forgot!", she laughed. "The trumpets? Wha… What do you all do while I'm gone?!", Mrs. Garcia yelled. Everyone took their tongue out of their lips, looking a bit away from their teacher. They eventually laughed about it.

Happily Ever After…